

**United States Environmental Protection Agency
Criminal Investigation Division
Investigative Activity Report**

Case Number:

1000-0494

Case Title:

Cooke Aquaculture Fish Farm Release

Subject of Report:

2018-05-23 Phone Interview of [REDACTED]

Reporting Office:

Seattle, WA, Area Office

Activity Date:

May 23, 2018

Reporting Official and Date:

[REDACTED]

Agent

25-MAY-2018, Signed by: [REDACTED]

Approving Official and Date:

[REDACTED]

30-MAY-2018, Approved by: [REDACTED]

SYNOPSIS

On May 23, 2018, SA [REDACTED] conducted a phone interview of [REDACTED], an [REDACTED] in Seattle, Washington.

DETAILS

On May 23, 2018, I conducted a phone interview of [REDACTED], an [REDACTED]. After being notified of the identity of the interviewing agent and the nature of the interview, [REDACTED], in substance, provided the following information:

BACKGROUND:

[REDACTED]

HISTORY OF DISEASE:

It is difficult to determine exactly where the Piscine Orthoreovirus (PRV) disease originated because the United States and Norway have on multiple instances traded fish between the two countries. The State of Washington attempted to introduce Atlantic Salmon in the 1950's and 1960's with no success, leading him to believe that maybe they are not fit for the conditions present in the northwest.

AQUACULTURE ISSUES:

Aquaculture net pens have a larger possibility of disease because of the close proximity of the contained fish. Other, native fish on the outside of the net pens who live near the net pens have a greater chance of contracting diseases because of their proximity. Non-native fish species being introduced to native waters

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can bring pathogens which native species do not have exposure to or resistance against.

Once aquaculture fish escape, there is no telling what other fish these non-native species can encounter. The chances of disease transfer are remote, but there have been instances of these Atlantic Salmon being caught in rivers and streams of Washington State.

The ability of disease to transfer mainly depends on what the status of the disease is within the tainted fish themselves. If the fish have recently contracted the disease there is a greater chance of transfer, but most of the Cooke Aquaculture fish were either being treated for the disease or on the recovery stage of the diseases. This time frame is where disease transfer is the least likely to occur.

In [REDACTED] opinion, land based aquaculture is much safer for preventing disease transfer. [REDACTED] wishes that this escape incident had not occurred and does not want water-based aquaculture in the region.

COOKE AQUACULTURE RELEASE:

[REDACTED] is familiar with the Atlantic Salmon release which occurred in August of 2017. [REDACTED] believes this is an "open and shut case" of escapement since fish have been caught all over Puget Sound, Canada and even in rivers such as the Skagit River in Skagit County. [REDACTED] believes that the escape should not have happened, but when it comes to disease transfer, he is not particularly concerned at this time.

Interspecies transfer of disease can and has occurred with multiple examples in nature demonstrating that disease introduction can have devastating effects on native populations. In this case of the Atlantic Salmon being released, there is no solid evidence that disease issues have occurred between the Atlantic Salmon and native Puget Sound Salmon yet. Once these fish were introduced into the waters of Puget Sound through proper permitting, the fish have already done almost any damage they could because of their presence.

Recently the State of Washington has denied Cooke Aquaculture's request to transfer a number of juvenile fish into their aquaculture net pens. The permit was denied because these hatchlings have been deemed to have an "exotic" strain of the PRV disease. The State of Washington does not want this disease introduced into the waters of Puget Sound. These fish will be destroyed and he supports this decision.

It is believed that the Atlantic Salmon released in August of 2017 had the same PRV disease, but in [REDACTED] estimation the fish were probably on the recovery from the disease. [REDACTED] believes that the fish that were released had the same strain of the "exotic" version of PRV which has been termed the "Icelandic" version.

It is [REDACTED] understanding that these fish were in good health when they escaped in August of 2017. These fish probably had the PRV disease, but were on the recovery stage of the disease and [REDACTED] does not consider this stage of possible disease transfer to be a problem for Puget Sound Salmon.

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